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EMPOWERING EFFECTIVE TEACHERS

READINESS
FOR REFORM

BILL & MELINDA
GATES *foundation*

FEBRUARY 2010
ISSUE BRIEF

ABOUT THIS SERIES

The contribution of teachers to student learning and outcomes is widely recognized. A teacher's effectiveness has more impact on student learning than any other factor under the control of school systems, including class size, school size, and the quality of after-school programs.¹ In a study of Los Angeles schools, the difference between the performance of a student assigned to a top-quartile teacher rather than a bottom-quartile teacher averaged 10 percentile points on a standardized math test.² Researchers studying high schools in North Carolina found that having a class with a strong teacher had an impact 14 times greater than having a class with five fewer students.³

In spite of these realities, the education community has not focused sufficiently on improving teacher effectiveness: on the recruitment, evaluation, development, placement, and retention of highly effective teachers. Instead of evaluating teachers' performance and treating them differently on that basis, teachers are treated uniformly and rewarded for longevity and degrees. Paper credentials that have little to no proven value trump how successfully teachers educate their students when it comes to compensation and tenure.

Intent on helping to change this current reality, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation embarked on a process to find sites that would help determine how to

use measures of teacher effectiveness to transform human resources, specifically in determining who is hired and retained, how tenure is granted, how teachers are placed, and how compensation and promotion are determined. In April 2009, the foundation asked nine school districts and one coalition of charter management organizations (see sidebar) to propose strategies for dramatically improving teacher effectiveness, including:

- developing meaningful measures of teacher effectiveness, including but not limited to student achievement growth over time
- increasing the overall numbers of effective teachers
- providing increased pay and greater roles and responsibilities for teachers who earn tenure
- concentrating effective teachers where they are needed most

The participating sites committed to bringing district leadership, school board leadership, and teachers' union leadership to the table to develop a plan to transform teacher effectiveness policies and practices. These working teams spent the summer of 2009 developing proposals that outlined how the sites would radically reorganize their practices and policies to ensure that every student is taught by an effective teacher.

Information for this report is based on analysis of teacher effectiveness proposals by the Boston Consulting Group, McKinsey & Company, and The Parthenon Group in the following sites:

Site Partnerships

Atlanta, GA

The College-Ready Promise, CA

Denver, CO

Hillsborough County, FL

Memphis, TN

Omaha, NE

Palm Beach County, FL

Pittsburgh, PA

Prince George's County, MD

Tulsa, OK

The request for proposals did not stipulate specific strategies for improvement, but in the course of their planning, the sites identified many of the same strategies, including:

- **adopting multidimensional measures of teacher effectiveness**, including measurements of students' academic growth over time
- **creating better teacher evaluation tools and processes** that strengthen the leadership and evaluation skills of principals, provide specific feedback to help teachers improve practice, and generate targeted professional development opportunities
- **making the tenure decision a more meaningful milestone**, using the improved teacher effectiveness measures and evaluation processes to create a rigorous process for granting tenure and increasing the reward for those effective teachers who earn tenure
- **designing career pathways and differentiating compensation**, so that effective teachers can be rewarded for their work in the classroom based on performance rather than longevity or degree attainment
- **attracting and placing highly effective teachers** in priority schools or classrooms

A PATHWAY TO EFFECTIVE TEACHING

As identified by participating sites

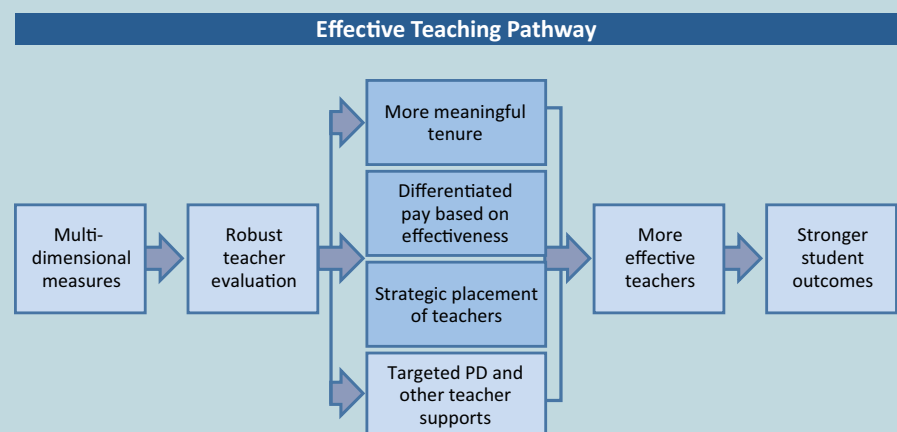


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Although the sites have not implemented their proposed strategies yet, the planning process yielded some critical lessons and approaches that the foundation felt were important to share as promising practices. Rigorous evaluation over time will determine which strategies produce the most significant results. This series focuses on three key questions:

- How can you tell if your school system is ready to engage in a teacher effectiveness reform agenda? (Brief 1)
- If you are ready to implement a teacher effectiveness agenda, where would you start and what steps might you take along the way? (Brief 2)
- What impact do state and federal policies have on your system's ability to undertake teacher effectiveness reforms? (Brief 3, forthcoming)

This first brief focuses on the identification of site readiness—the conditions that support effective implementation.

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Measures of Effective Teaching

One barrier to major systems change is the lack of robust, multidimensional measures of teacher effectiveness. Great teaching, after all, is multidimensional and should be viewed through multiple lenses. Teachers should know what the expectations are for good teaching and what they can do to improve their practice. In fall 2009, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation launched the Measures of Effective Teaching project to study multiple measures of teacher effectiveness—including videotaped classroom observations, student surveys, tests of teachers' pedagogical content knowledge, and other test- and nontest-based data—and compare the measures to nationally recognized teaching standards. These data will help determine ways in which effective teaching can be measured fairly and consistently.

For more information on this project, current grants for teacher effectiveness, and what we are learning, please visit www.gatesfoundation.org.

INTRODUCTION

Every student deserves to be taught by an effective teacher. Ensuring an effective teacher in every classroom, every year, is the primary responsibility of every school system in this country and the key opportunity for transforming education today. Once school systems make a commitment to this reform endeavor, they need to assess their level of readiness—diagnosing the conditions that support or inhibit reform and mapping a path forward based on the conditions, current context, and capacity they find. By objectively determining a starting point, a school system can shape a course of action to address gaps, build on strengths, and improve the prospects for success.

Each site that participated in teacher effectiveness planning over the summer of 2009 engaged in a rigorous assessment of its own environment. While the sites were at different levels of readiness, they surfaced many of the same conditions required for advancing teacher effectiveness initiatives. These conditions fall into four distinct categories and represent a minimum readiness threshold that all sites should consider—or seek to achieve—before embarking on deep reform. The four categories are:

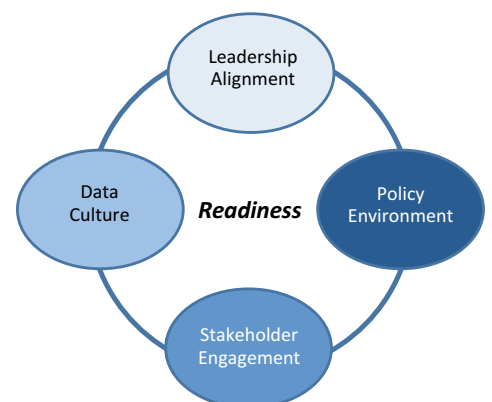
- shared leadership, vision, and commitment to action, with the creation of a core group of site leaders, teachers and their unions, and school board to develop and define the vision of teacher effectiveness

- a culture of data-driven decision-making, with high-quality, robust data systems and evidence of use
- stakeholder engagement, including a commitment to collaborate with internal and external stakeholders
- policies that support, or at a minimum do not restrict, improvement efforts

In addition to illustrating specific readiness factors in each of these categories with examples from the sites, this paper includes rubrics that illustrate a continuum of readiness for the four categories and guidance on what constitutes a base level of readiness. The rubrics are drawn from the experiences of these sites as well as knowledge gained from other reform efforts.

The 10 sites began their planning processes from very different starting points. Some sites had limited working relationships with their teachers' unions, while others had a deep history of effective site-union collaboration. Sites in some states benefited from strong state data systems and policies that support student-teacher data linkages. Some sites were broaching the idea of value-added metrics for the first time.

No matter where they started, every site emerged from the proposal process with an explicit plan to implement far-reaching reform strategies to empower effective teachers, including strategies to mitigate or improve on the conditions of readiness.



SHARED LEADERSHIP, VISION, AND COMMITMENT TO ACTION

Shared leadership

“... we didn’t have a strong working relationship with the union, so trust was a significant factor. We spent a lot of upfront time on process and building trust”

Each of the 10 sites emphasized the value of collaboration in determining the direction of teacher effectiveness initiatives, the strategies to use, and the measurements to evaluate progress. A core group of site, school board, union, and classroom leaders shared the responsibility for this initial brainstorming phase, with some groups meeting as often as every week to discuss and explore possibilities.

This collaborative effort of district leaders, unions, and school boards proved essential to building and maintaining a basic level of trust; developing a common strategic vision of teacher effectiveness goals, definitions, and priorities; and creating support for the basic principles and values of teacher effectiveness strategies.

Making teacher effectiveness a high priority

“This [teacher effectiveness] initiative must be one of the few top initiatives that a site undertakes for the next few years”

Site leaders demonstrated that teacher effectiveness was a high priority in two very visible ways: by allocating often scarce resources—their time and

teams—to support and actively participate in key decision processes. Many sites chose to reallocate resources from other initiatives that they deemed less critical to ensure an appropriate allocation of time, money, and other resources to support their teacher effectiveness agendas.

A reliable way to measure commitment is to observe who attends meetings in which the issue is discussed. Who has made this a priority on an overscheduled day? Sites with high levels of commitment assign responsibility for oversight to those who report directly to the superintendent; sites best prepared for this work have leaders who can support a clear strategic vision by applying practical skills in project management and political expertise, thus accelerating key decisions and navigating obstacles.

- One site noted the importance of devoting necessary senior staff resources and time to both the teacher effectiveness planning process and ongoing implementation.
- One site, together with the school board, eliminated a number of lower-priority reforms to redirect the necessary resources to these initiatives.
- Another site credited its success to the amount of time site leaders invested in working with the union and school board to ensure that teacher effectiveness became a joint priority.



- Some sites demonstrated more intermediate or advanced readiness levels by having effective organizational infrastructure and operating efficiencies across human resources, finance, school operations, transportation, and other key central office functions.

Commitment to action

“Prior to this planning effort [with the foundation], we had never really thought of going after such aggressive reforms. This process was a catalyst for our site to act in ways that we would not—and could not—have done without [engaging in a process like this.]”

The 10 sites say that superintendents, leadership teams, and union and school board partners must be willing and able to challenge many deeply ingrained practices and value systems. Many teacher effectiveness reforms rely on innovative practices that represent a major threat to the status quo, such as compensation tied to student achievement growth over time rather than the number of academic degrees a teacher earns or years in the classroom.

These sites understand that pursuing bold reform requires strong district leader-union-school board relationships through periods of strain and controversy. At a minimum, sites must be willing to ask difficult questions that challenge current systems and practices. One site credits the dedicated planning process with

sufficiently strengthening the district-union relationship to enable discussions of reform: “Over the three months of planning, both [the district’s and the union’s] mindsets evolved. The union had always been ready to defend teachers at all costs, but through this process we see that we’re all in this together and we have become more proactive,” said one leader.

- Across the foundation’s 10 partnership sites, all leaders were universally open to conversations that challenged long-standing conventions of teacher quality.
- In sites at earlier stages of readiness, leadership made critical progress in building the necessary foundation for reform.
- Sites with higher levels of readiness have gone beyond conversations to developing targeted initiatives such as incentive and performance pay.
- Sites with higher readiness levels often can point to examples of other reform success that came not only from effective implementation but also from the ability to review incremental progress, make mid-course adjustments, and demonstrate measurable and meaningful outcomes.

Definition of teacher effectiveness

“When our pay-for-performance initiative began, we had disagreements with the teachers’ union over tying data to teachers. Now that we’ve resolved that issue, it’s much easier to talk about teacher effectiveness.”

... growth in student achievement over time is a major component in defining teacher effectiveness.

Once members of the core group have found the meeting room and seats at the table, the first questions they ask are often the same, no matter where the discussion is taking place in the country: What do we mean by teacher effectiveness? Are we talking about evaluating teachers based on student performance? Hiring highly qualified teachers? Better evaluation processes? An important readiness criterion is the recognition that growth in student achievement over time is a major component in defining teacher effectiveness.

- These 10 sites acknowledged the importance of working on a concise and clear definition of teacher effectiveness to lay the groundwork for identifying specific strategies and creating plans to implement them.
- Sites that already have engaged in active dialogue about teacher effectiveness tend to be more ready for reform than sites with limited experience in making teacher effectiveness a key strategic priority.
- Many sites have undertaken discrete and often site-wide initiatives related to teacher effectiveness that supported the effort to reach a consensus definition of what an effective teacher looks like.
- While sites with a history of internal and external discussions about teacher effectiveness benefited from higher readiness levels, the quality of the discussion and the definition that resulted also were important.

Spectrum of Readiness To Engage in Shared Leadership

Early

District Readiness Continuum

Advanced

Common Leadership Vision and Willingness To Collaborate (District-Union-School Board)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Little history of district-union-school board collaboration ■ Low receptiveness to teacher effectiveness value and/or principles ■ Inconsistent vision for teacher effectiveness need and/or value 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Some history of effective district-union-school board collaboration ■ Base level of trust among district-union-school board ■ Shared values for importance of teacher effectiveness strategies ■ Willingness to craft a common teacher effectiveness vision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strong history of deep and effective district-union-school board collaboration ■ Past collaboration includes discrete teacher effectiveness initiatives ■ Common and explicit vision for teacher effectiveness strategies shared by district-union-school board
Commitment to/Capacity for Teacher Effectiveness Prioritization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ District over-commitment to numerous initiatives ■ Lack of clear prioritization across district initiatives ■ No clear accountability for teacher effectiveness outcomes ■ Limited superintendent/leadership engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Teacher effectiveness is one of a select number of district priorities ■ Targeted and capable central office resources committed to teacher effectiveness ■ Clear central accountability for teacher effectiveness outcomes ■ Superintendent and leadership team committed to monthly teacher effectiveness meetings and deliverables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Teacher effectiveness is the top district priority ■ Dedicated and capable central office resources committed to teacher effectiveness ■ Clear and measurable accountability for teacher effectiveness outcomes ■ Superintendent and leadership team actively participate in and contribute to regular working sessions (weekly or biweekly)
Leadership Orientation for Reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Low/limited leadership willingness for reform ■ History of limited and/or incremental changes ■ Unclear and/or undefined vision for district progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Joint work with district-union-school board to develop targeted teacher effectiveness initiatives (e.g., bonus plans) ■ Articulated vision for district progress includes targeted areas for significant change and emphasizes student achievement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ High leadership willingness to undertake major reforms and change ingrained practices ■ District vision for progress includes high-priority areas for reform aligned with a singular focus on student achievement

The readiness factors in these rubrics have been observed in the 10 participating sites, as well as in other districts involved in similar reform efforts, and are intended to guide districts intent on creating the conditions for successful implementation of teacher effectiveness reforms.

CULTURE OF DATA-DRIVEN DECISIONMAKING

Strategic use of data

“Our site had never used data for anything other than compliance purposes prior to this teacher effectiveness planning process. Suffice to say, the way in which we’ve used data to understand our site over the last few months has fundamentally changed how we operate as an organization.”

Data without analysis are nothing more than a collection of numbers. Most of the 10 sites have a history of using data in a meaningful way to inform their strategic direction—supporting proven practices, dispelling myths, and defining actionable strategies for site, school, and classroom leaders alike. They use data to facilitate difficult public conversations and build consensus around controversial strategies and reforms. Good data systems allow site leaders to have the confidence to make bold choices. Student achievement data help teachers and principals understand how to employ strategies and techniques to improve achievement.

At the most basic level, these sites use data to measure site and school performance, identify areas for improvement, and develop relevant strategies. Once ready to pursue strategies, they use data to understand strengths and weaknesses as well as inform critical strategic decisions. These sites understand the need for knowledgeable personnel, at the central office and school level as well as among the union and school board, with the

capacity to analyze, understand, and use data for making decisions. Site readiness varies depending on how willingly a site, its teachers, and the union use data to inform sensitive decisions on compensation, career progression, and tenure.

- One site cited its limited strategic use of data as both an advantage and disadvantage. On the one hand, the site has a clean slate to build a new mindset around data and their use. On the other, the challenge to transform the site’s historically compliance-driven data culture requires a significant departure from past practices and remains the focus of an intense change process.
- Another site noted the advantage of having a “culture of data orientation that pervades all levels of our site and our schools.” While it took a long time to achieve this culture, the site then had a huge head start in pursuing more sophisticated uses of data to improve teacher effectiveness.
- One site is investing in systems improvements to access new types of human resources data that will enhance its pre-existing value-added measures.
- One site’s teachers not only receive regular student data reports, but they also are trained in how to use such data to make adjustments to instructional strategies.



- One site credited the formal and informal use of data in conversations with principals and school leaders for its success in defining and evaluating accountability targets linked to school performance bonuses.

The sites with the highest levels of readiness have a culture of data use that extends beyond site leadership. They engage the school board, union, principals, and teachers in ongoing dialogue, decision-making, implementation, and accountability efforts, with data informing all discussions. Performance metrics and dashboards tend to be used systemically, not only to guide and adjust implementation activities but also to engage and communicate progress to a broad group of stakeholders.

Whatever their stage of readiness, these sites recognize that a strategic use of data requires them to:

- acknowledge the importance of data in strategic decisionmaking and perpetuate this value in practices in the central office, schools, and classrooms
- educate stakeholders in how and why data are used to support decision-making
- build widespread acceptance of data-driven decisionmaking by making it a common practice
- develop their organizational capacity to analyze, understand, and use data for strategic (versus compliance) purposes

Data quality, availability, and integration

“Having the groundwork laid for our data warehouse prior to the teacher effectiveness proposal has been extremely helpful in accelerating our teacher effectiveness efforts.”

A school district’s ultimate level of readiness will vary depending on data quality, availability, and the integration of different systems. The basic data requirements needed to measure teacher effectiveness address multiple issues.

Data Elements	Rationale for Importance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Unique IDs for students, teachers, and courses that are consistent over time and across disparate data systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Necessary for tracking progress over time ■ Key to determining whether strategies are benefiting all student groups equally
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Link between teachers and students ■ Available student standardized test scores, i.e., end of grade (3–8 at least), benchmark assessments, or state/national tests that measure growth over time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Must be linked to measure a teacher’s value-add
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Student and teacher demographic characteristics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Can help determine predicted growth and value-added scores
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Human resources/teacher background information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Through further research, can help determine characteristics of successful teachers

Clearly, the ability to link student and teacher data is a necessary prerequisite—if not the linchpin—to define and measure teacher effectiveness. Since there were no legal barriers to linking student and teacher data for the participating sites, they have cleared a major readiness hurdle. Their next step is to assess whether they have taken advantage of this opportunity to measure teacher effectiveness. School systems with barriers to linking student and teacher data must evaluate the effort required to remove such barriers and/or alternative means to develop relevant teacher effectiveness measures.

... the ability to link student and teacher data is a necessary prerequisite—if not the linchpin—to define and measure teacher effectiveness.

In addition to policy or legal barriers, other data issues can present challenges to teacher effectiveness strategies. For example, it can take significant time, energy, and skill to identify and integrate required data elements if data systems do not communicate well. Handwritten teacher evaluations require substantial effort to upload for integration with other data elements. Outdated human resources

data systems create headaches for those trying to link personnel records with student records. Some teacher effectiveness measures are qualitative—classroom observations, peer reviews, student surveys—and are difficult to convert to a consistent scale.

Another hurdle is the availability of regular, standardized student assessment measures. NCLB requires annual testing in grades 3–8. Where these tests are rigorous, robust, vertically aligned, and aligned to state standards, and where results are returned in a timely manner, districts are at an advantage.

These challenges underscore a broader set of systemic practices and processes that make it difficult for stakeholders to access and use data. Many school systems lack systematic operating procedures to define and monitor how student data are entered at the school level. As a result, the quality of school-level data that are uploaded to site data systems is unreliable, which can make a reform effort such as this more difficult. Participating sites that demonstrate a higher level of readiness have strong data governance and operating procedures that are driven by school leadership and audited at the central office level.

Spectrum of Readiness To Use Data for Decisions

Early

District Readiness Continuum

Advanced

Strategic Use of Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Compliance-driven culture of data usage ■ Limited use of data to inform strategic priorities and/or decisions ■ “Data-weary” district culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Targeted use of data to inform a district’s strategic priorities and actions ■ Inconsistent use of data-driven decisionmaking outside of the central office ■ Principals review student test data on an annual basis to diagnose key learning issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strategic use of data is core to the district’s operating principles ■ Systemic approach to data usage (central office to the classroom) to measure and improve performance ■ Monthly school-level review of interim student assessment data to inform immediate student learning strategies ■ Central office use of hiring data to inform teacher placement ■ Dedicated central office resources for strategic use of data
Data Quality, Availability, and Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Limited level of state student testing data ■ Little formalized district test data ■ No unique student IDs ■ Inability to link databases and/or systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ State and/or district test data ■ Unique student IDs ■ Ability to link student data across different systems ■ Ability to link student and teacher data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Pre-existing state or district longitudinal data system with integrated historical student and teacher data and unique IDs
Definition and Use of Teacher Effectiveness Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Limited prior efforts to define and/or measure teacher effectiveness ■ Limited active dialogue on teacher effectiveness (both internal and external to district) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Preliminary efforts to define teacher effectiveness via targeted input from central office leadership, teachers, and principals ■ Active district-union-school board discourse on teacher effectiveness importance ■ Preliminary and/or piloted use of select teacher effectiveness measures (e.g., incentive pay, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Explicit district teacher effectiveness definition derived via multi-stakeholder input ■ Pre-existing value-add data linking student and teacher data ■ History of broader implementation of targeted teacher effectiveness initiatives (e.g., incentive pay, differentiated comp)

The readiness factors in these rubrics have been observed in the 10 participating sites, as well as in other districts involved in similar reform efforts, and are intended to guide districts intent on creating the conditions for successful implementation of teacher effectiveness reforms.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Internal stakeholder engagement

“I don’t know how a site could get through this [planning process and strategy implementation] without a great union relationship that is built on trust.”

Sites that were best able to accelerate reform had established the precedent of working with their unions and school boards to solve meaningful problems.

From the perspective of internal site constituents, engagement of the local teachers’ union and school board greatly enhances the depth and strength of an initiative. Sites that were best able to accelerate reform had established the precedent of working with their unions and school boards to solve meaningful problems.

- One district with a “great” site-union relationship and a “multiyear” history of collaboration had already negotiated performance and incentive pay in its teachers’ contract. This allowed the site to accelerate its teacher effectiveness planning efforts.
- Districts in the process noted that a commitment to address teacher effectiveness reforms also can encourage district-union-school board collaboration in sites with limited prior working relationships.
- One district and union used the planning process to foster a much stronger working relationship. Guided by

senior-level district leadership and regular—and intense—working sessions among the district, union, and school board leadership, the three parties built a foundation of trust.

Principal and teacher engagement is an equally important readiness factor. Principals have the ultimate responsibility for implementing many components of teacher effectiveness strategies and for building trust with teachers so that they understand and support reforms. They also are gatekeepers for critical student and teacher data, much of which are input into site data systems from the school level.

Other readiness factors here include professional development for principals on teacher evaluation and formal processes for soliciting teacher input in defining teacher effectiveness and its measures.

- One superintendent schedules regular visits with principals, teachers, and school leadership teams to discuss ongoing efforts. The site credits this effort with teachers feeling connected to both the central office and the broader teacher effectiveness initiative.
- One site conducts ongoing teacher education to explain specific teacher effectiveness measures and communicates to teachers the broader career benefits and implications of the initiatives.

External stakeholder engagement

“We weren’t quite prepared for the required level of external stakeholder engagement—this required a much greater effort than we had done in the past.”

Site readiness is affected by the scale and depth of relationships with external stakeholders, as well as the local landscape of site-community relationships. Sites with a strong history of broad external stakeholder engagement are further along the readiness continuum. In one site, community leaders played a pivotal role in advocating for placing the best teachers in classrooms with the most underserved students. Likewise, sites with historic and successful partnerships with service providers and community-based organizations are more likely to accelerate their efforts by tapping into their networks. Sites with the greatest readiness levels

are able to harness external resources to support teacher effectiveness strategies in ways that affect the speed and scale of implementation.

In particular, these sites assessed how readily their network of current external stakeholders and partners could help:

- educate and build support for teacher effectiveness initiatives with key external constituents, both locally and at a broader state level
- engage students, parents, and community members in early and ongoing dialogues about teacher effectiveness and implications for student achievement
- identify and engage partners to support teacher effectiveness efforts, including considerations for tactical (e.g., service organizations) and philanthropic/financial support (e.g., local and national foundations)



Spectrum of Readiness To Engage Stakeholders

<div> <div>Early</div> <div>District Readiness Continuum</div> <div>Advanced</div> </div>			
Internal Stakeholder Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited teacher effectiveness awareness and/or discourse among teachers and principals Low support for teacher effectiveness among teachers and principals, evidenced in widespread resistance and/or contract impasses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Familiarity of and/or active discussion of teacher effectiveness among teachers and principals Targeted district efforts to engage teachers and principals in teacher effectiveness discourse, including ongoing teacher/principal input in development and enhancement of evaluation tools/processes Moderate/mixed teacher and principal support of teacher effectiveness, evidenced in reasonably positive collective bargaining efforts around teacher effectiveness issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High level of awareness of and engagement in teacher effectiveness strategy process among teachers and principals Broad understanding among teachers of student growth measures Strong teacher and principal support of teacher effectiveness
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited community awareness/ understanding of teacher effectiveness Few external organizations to support local teacher effectiveness efforts Teacher effectiveness discussions with external stakeholders are often antagonistic, with little measurable progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderate community awareness/understanding of teacher effectiveness Moderate/strong network of local and/or national partners with targeted history of successful partnerships Local philanthropic support—primarily financial—of select teacher effectiveness initiatives Existence of local advocacy groups with broad community membership and general fluency around the importance of teacher effectiveness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High level of awareness of teacher effectiveness and engagement in strategy process among community members, evidenced by strong fluency in the importance of teacher effectiveness Strong network of local and national partners, with demonstrated track record of effective partnerships Robust network of external constituents—community, parents, nonprofits—that support district teacher effectiveness initiatives through explicit funding and advocacy

The readiness factors in these rubrics have been observed in the 10 participating sites, as well as in other districts involved in similar reform efforts, and are intended to guide districts intent on creating the conditions for successful implementation of teacher effectiveness reforms.

POLICY ENVIRONMENT

Local and state policy

Finally, a school system's readiness to undertake teacher effectiveness strategies will depend on the extent to which policies assist or impede hiring, evaluation, tenure, compensation, and placement.

The evaluation of policy barriers or supports is arguably more straightforward than in the other three readiness areas. For example, school systems that must define "highly qualified" teachers based on narrow parameters (e.g., educational level or seniority) or have limited flexibility on tenure and compensation will have to work harder to implement effectiveness reforms. Similarly, many districts must use mandated (and often low-quality) evaluation tools to assess teacher performance. In these cases, readiness will be affected by the amount of effort required to secure waivers or advocate for legislative changes, both of which are time- and resource-intensive.

- One site is attempting to increase the threshold for granting tenure within the state's mandated three-year period instead of lobbying state legislators to extend the decision point beyond three years.

While many state and local policy issues vary, the following issues are relatively common across states and among these sites:

- ability to link teacher and student data for use in measuring teacher impact on student outcomes
- state-level support for improving and integrating P-20 data systems
- flexible tenure and compensation laws
- state-level support for teacher effectiveness strategies, especially where such support could provide opportunities for favorable legislative amendments and/or additional funding and resources to help implement site reforms

... readiness will be affected by the amount of effort required to secure waivers or advocate for legislative changes, both of which are time- and resource-intensive.

Spectrum of Policy Barriers

District Readiness Continuum			
Early			Advanced
Local and State Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Local/state legislation that prohibits student/teacher data linkage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Limited policy, legislative, and/or contractual barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">No formal policy, legislative, and/or contractual barriers to teacher effectiveness
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Union contract barriers to teacher effectiveness data use, metrics, and/or strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Most significant barriers can be addressed through moderate efforts in a short- to mid-term timeframe	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Pre-existing barriers that require significant efforts to favorably revise legislation/policy		

The readiness factors in these rubrics have been observed in the 10 participating sites, as well as in other districts involved in similar reform efforts, and are intended to guide districts intent on creating the conditions for successful implementation of teacher effectiveness reforms.



Base-Level Factors Needed To Engage in Teacher Effectiveness Initiative

		Base-Level Factors	Additional Helpful Factors
Shared Leadership Commitment and Vision	Common leadership vision and willingness to collaborate (district-union-school board)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> District, union, and school board are willing to work together toward common vision of teacher effectiveness strategy Base level of trust among district, board, and union, with select examples of effective collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> District, union, and school board have a common vision of teacher effectiveness strategy with set objectives and end goals Deep history of successful and trusted collaboration among district, board, and union
	Commitment to/capacity for teacher effectiveness prioritization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher effectiveness is one of the top priorities of the district with resources dedicated and accountable to initiative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Top leadership is directly involved in teacher effectiveness and has repositioned employees and finances for teacher effectiveness initiative
	Leadership orientation for reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership is willing to examine and pursue targeted reforms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership has already exhibited reform tendencies
Culture of Data-Driven Decision-making	Strategic use of data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership engages in data-driven decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> District leadership has educated stakeholders in the ways to use data in decisions and encourages stakeholders to do so
	Data quality, availability, and integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data warehouse, linking most disparate data systems, that links students to teachers with unique IDs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-existing state or district longitudinal data system with integrated historical student and teacher data and unique IDs
	Definition and use of teacher effectiveness measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working toward gathering data and union agreement to establish pay-for-performance and other related initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-existing value-add data that links students to teachers Pay-for-performance and other related initiatives already in place
Stakeholder Engagement	Internal stakeholder engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers and principals are involved in and receptive to discussions of teacher effectiveness strategies and principles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers and principals have a high level of trust that the district will follow through with teacher effectiveness initiatives, based on history of follow-through in previous initiatives
	External stakeholder engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community is involved in and receptive to discussions of teacher effectiveness strategies and principles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community has a high level of trust that the district will follow through with teacher effectiveness, based on history of follow-through in previous initiatives
Policy Environment	Local and state policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policies allow for the linking of student and teacher data and do not excessively impede changes in tenure or other teacher effectiveness-related policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State provides funding and additional support to district for teacher effectiveness initiatives State is willing to soften barriers to teacher effectiveness initiatives

ENDNOTES

¹ Steven G. Rivkin, Eric A. Hanushek, and John F. Kain, “Teachers, Schools, and Academic Achievement,” *Econometrica*, Vol. 73, No. 2 (March 2005), pages 417–458.

² Robert Gordon, Thomas J. Kane, and Douglas O. Staiger, “Identifying Effective Teachers Using Performance on the Job,” *Hamilton Project Discussion Paper*, (March 2006), The Brookings Institution.

³ C. Clotfelter, H. Ladd, and J. Vigdor, “How and Why Do Teacher Credentials Matter for Student Achievement?” (2007b), National Center for the Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research; Clotfelter et al. (2007a).

“We did not have a comprehensive teacher effectiveness strategy before [this planning effort]—we just had different pieces of it. People [in the district] are excited that this is now all under one strategy. It’s more focused with better outcomes and [is] more transparent. Fewer people are averse to the individual initiatives now that they are all part of a cohesive [reform] effort.”

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